

Dear Chairs Abercrombie and Moore, Vice Chairs Lesser and Leeper, Ranking Members Berthel and Case, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Meridian Monthy and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 284 - An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years for an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status**. This bill would provide state-funded medical assistance to any child or young adult under the age of eighteen years of age, regardless of immigration status, whose household income does not exceed two hundred one percent of the federal poverty level, and who does not otherwise qualify for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance 11 Program, or employer-sponsored insurance.

Connecticut's expansion of HUSKY last year to children ages 0-8 years was an important win for immigrants in the state, who have been predominantly challenged by the shortage of healthcare resources available to them. The passage of S.B 284 would expand this win by guaranteeing more access to programs like HUSKY that largely benefit low-income immigrant families and individuals. Undocumented immigrants without coverage must rely on health care safety net resources, such as public hospitals or community clinics, to access needed medical care. Despite serving as important access points, none of these resources is equivalent to having comprehensive health insurance coverage.

Healthcare, specifically at the present moment, is necessary. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased industrialization and pollution of society, providing coverage for people residing all over the United States is more prevalent than ever. Providing preventative and stable health coverage has been shown to reduce healthcare costs and save money by insuring individuals and allowing them to receive preventative care and treat issues earlier on. Early treatment effectively reduces the amount an individual will pay for healthcare in the long term by preventing health issues from developing further and worsening. Thus, providing healthcare actually saves money in the long run, very important as of late.

Data reported by the Migrant Policy Institute (MPI) estimates 30.1% of foreign-born, non-citizens in Connecticut have no health care coverage, an estimated 159,600 individuals. In the undocumented community, that number goes up to an estimated 52% uninsured rate, or 53,000 uninsured undocumented individuals. Connecticut must recognize this staggering gap in equity if it hopes to lower the state's overall uninsured rate, especially during a pandemic that is impacting immigrants disproportionately. While the uninsured rate in Connecticut is roughly 5.9%, an estimated 52% of undocumented immigrants in our state are uninsured. This number amounts to thousands of people that are living in fear of getting into a car crash or getting sick because of the necessity to pay out of pocket. This is a terrifying existence to live, having to always be worried about the insurmountable costs of our healthcare system. Connecticut's HUSKY Health Programs restricts applicants eligibility based on immigration status. Currently, undocumented individuals (those who are not US citizens or greencard holders) and those who have held a greencard for less than 5 years are unable to qualify for HUSKY. For people at lower

income levels, HUSKY is the best option because it removes the barrier of deductibles and copays. As such, expanding HUSKY for immigrants regardless of status would benefit low-income families and individuals who would otherwise not be able to purchase coverage.

The largest argument against including undocumented immigrants in the healthcare system is that they do not pay taxes and thus do not deserve the system as they would benefit from other people's taxes. However, undocumented immigrants in our state pay roughly 145 million dollars into state and local taxes every year, 253 million into federal taxes, out of that 54.6 million goes into medicare and 207.4 million goes into social security according to a study conducted by the New American Economy. Undocumented taxpayers are contributing to the state's health programs, but their status makes them ineligible to access said state health programs. This presents a stark problem -- immigrants are paying for a medical system yet have no access to it. Undocumented residents pay both state and federal taxes, which help fund programs like HUSKY Health, and they should therefore have access to coverage.

In conclusion, I urge you to expand healthcare to the immigrant population because it would allow them to receive the preventative treatment they deserve, reduce the uninsured rate in Connecticut, and save the state money by decreasing uncompensated care costs. Connecticut can and should do better in promoting healthcare as a human right, rather than a commodity that only the wealthy can afford. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Human Services Committee so that more immigrants in the state are able to access and afford health care that they're in desperate need of.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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